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Fifty-eighth session
Item 119 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Human rights questions: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives

Situation of human rights in Iraq

Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the interim report prepared by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Iraq, Andreas Mavrommatis, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/232 of 18 December 2002.

* A/58/150.

** The present note is being submitted on 3 September 2003 so as to include as much updated information as possible.

03-49614 (E) 260903

Interim report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Iraq

1. By its resolution 2003/84 of 25 April 2003, the Commission on Human Rights renewed for a further year the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iraq. In particular the Commission requested the Special Rapporteur to submit an interim report on the situation of human rights in Iraq, focusing on newly available information about violations of human rights and international law by the Government of Iraq over many years, to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and to report to the Commission at its sixtieth session.

2. The Special Rapporteur has taken due note of the particular emphasis laid by that resolution on the examination of new evidence of past human rights violations, but wishes to state that he has always followed with utmost concern and attention the general human rights situation in Iraq. He has maintained numerous contacts with informed members of the diplomatic community, representatives of Permanent Missions in Geneva and elsewhere, United Nations agencies, Iraqis and representatives of international and national non-governmental organizations, thus having an overall picture of the human rights situation in Iraq. In addition, allegations regarding issues pertaining to his mandate have been submitted to the Special Rapporteur.

3. It was in the light of these considerations that on 13 May 2003 the Special Rapporteur addressed a letter to the Permanent Mission of the United States of America, informing it of his intention to carry out as soon as possible, preferably in July 2003, an exploratory three-day visit to Iraq, in pursuance of Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/84. In a second letter to the Permanent Mission of the United States of America, dated 7 July 2003, the Special Rapporteur indicated that during his stay in Iraq, he would be meeting with the Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority, representatives at the highest level of the Iraqi Governing Council, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations agencies and international and national non-governmental organizations, as well as with representatives of religious communities. Should security conditions permit, the Special Rapporteur would also make a field visit outside Baghdad to one location in the northern or southern part of Iraq. During his visit to Iraq, he would focus also on issues raised in his previous reports, such as the right to life, the missing, mass graves, the judiciary system, torture and prison conditions.

4. In its response, dated 31 July 2003, the Permanent Mission of the United States of America informed the Special Rapporteur that the Coalition Provisional Authority would welcome his visit during the month of September to focus on past, gross and systematic human rights violations. In a further letter of 19 August 2003 to the Permanent Mission of the United States of America, the Special Rapporteur welcomed its response on behalf of the Coalition Provisional Authority and proposed the period from 22 to 27 September 2003 for his visit to Iraq.

5. A few short hours after the sending of that letter, the Special Rapporteur was utterly shocked and deeply saddened to hear about the bomb attack against the headquarters of the United Nations mission in Baghdad, in which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq — and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights — as well as 22 other United Nations officials lost their lives in the ruins of the building, and about 100 other people were injured,

many of them severely injured or traumatized. The Special Rapporteur wishes to salute the valuable contribution of the late United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in general and his contribution to Iraq in particular.

6. Those tragic events have redoubled the determination of the Special Rapporteur to do everything possible within his mandate to ensure that democracy in Iraq is firmly entrenched in a culture of human rights and that those who have been responsible for gross and systematic human rights violations for decades are brought to justice. Following the designation by the Secretary-General of Ramiro Lopes da Silva as his acting Special Representative for Iraq, the Special Rapporteur is maintaining his plans, as scheduled, for his visit to Iraq, provided of course that the results of the survey carried out by a team from the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator to assess the security situation in Iraq permit the realization of that visit.

7. Should conditions be such as to severely restrict the freedom of movement of the Special Rapporteur in connection with his contacts, appointments, or visit to the location outside Baghdad, the Special Rapporteur may then envisage, most reluctantly, the postponement of his mission to Iraq. In such a case, the Special Rapporteur would consider, as in the past, alternative methods of obtaining new evidence and doing whatever else was necessary to discharge his mandate and to report thereon, as requested, by submitting an addendum to the present report.

8. In case the Special Rapporteur is able to carry out his visit to Iraq as scheduled, the addendum to the present report will focus on the observations, findings and recommendations drawn from his mission.

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Fifty-eighth session
Item 84 of the provisional agenda*
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training, for Palestine refugees

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/120, reiterated its appeals to all States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to continue and augment the special allocations for grants and scholarships to Palestine refugees, in addition to their contributions to the regular budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Assembly also appealed to all States, specialized agencies and other international bodies to extend assistance for higher education to Palestine refugee students and to contribute towards the establishment of vocational training centres for Palestine refugees. The Assembly furthermore requested UNRWA to act as the recipient and trustee for the special allocations for grants and scholarships, and appealed to all States, specialized agencies and the United Nations University to contribute generously to the Palestinian universities in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. Finally, it requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution.

The present report details the fellowships and scholarships contributed by the Governments of Japan and Switzerland through UNRWA to Palestine refugees. It also outlines the scholarships and fellowships provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Development Research Centre and other non-governmental organizations.

* A/58/150.

** The document was submitted late to the conference services without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in a footnote to the document.

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1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of paragraph 4 of its resolution 57/120.

2. The report includes the substance of responses from Member States and United Nations agencies to the appeal contained in that resolution, together with reference to further action taken by Member States and United Nations agencies in response to the appeal contained in General Assembly resolutions 32/90 F, 33/112 C, 34/52 C, 35/13 B, 36/146 H, 37/120 D, 38/83 D, 39/99 D, 40/165 D, 41/69 D, 42/69 D, 43/57 D, 44/47 D, 45/73 D, 46/46 D, 47/69 D, 48/40 D, 49/35 D, 50/28, 51/127, 52/60, 53/49, 54/72, 55/126, 56/55 and 57/120. By those resolutions, the Assembly appealed to all States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to augment special allocations for grants and scholarships to Palestine refugees; invited the relevant specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to continue, within their respective spheres of competence, to extend assistance for higher education to Palestine refugee students; and requested the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to act as the recipient and trustee for such special allocations for grants and scholarships and to award them to qualified refugee candidates.

3. In 2002/2003, the Government of Japan awarded 12 fellowships through UNRWA to Palestine refugees who were employed by UNRWA as vocational training staff at the eight vocational training centres in the UNRWA area of operations. These were processed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. A review of that programme from its inception in 1985 and until 2002 shows that a total of 211 scholarships were offered by the Government of Japan, of which 199 have been processed. In 1989, the Government of Japan contributed $1 million, to be spent over a five-year period, towards the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. The recipients were Palestine refugee students from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Between 1993 and 2001, 161 students graduated from this programme in a wide range of specializations. The Government of Japan contributed an additional $400,000 in 1992, 1993 and 1994, $500,000 in 1995 and $600,000 in 1996 and 1997, to be spent over a five-year period, towards UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates from the UNRWA area of operations. The recipients were Palestine refugee students. In 1998, the Government of Japan contributed $71,000 for the university scholarship programme. This contribution was used in 1998/1999 to cover the awards of 111 continuing students out of 154 hitherto financed by UNRWA General Fund budget, whose funding had been frozen owing to the financial problems facing UNRWA. Funding of the awards for the remaining 43 students was covered from savings from previous Japanese contributions realized as a consequence of the early graduation of some students and the failure of others. In 1999, owing to the cancellation of the portion of the university scholarship fund that had been financed from the General Fund budget and the fact that funding from donors to finance the subprogramme was not forthcoming, the UNRWA Education Department used the funds already available from the Japanese contribution to finance the studies of most of the students through their graduation. A total of 50 recipients participated in the programme in the academic year 2002/03, while 633 students graduated in the period 1995-2002. Those awards, while not provided specifically in response to the General Assembly resolution, are in keeping with its spirit and intent.

4. The Government of Switzerland contributed $1,703,581 between 1989 and 1996 and $338,000 in 1997 to the UNRWA scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. Of the 315 students who benefited from part of the 1997 Swiss contribution for one year only, 67 graduated in 1998, seven failed and 87 were granted scholarships in 1998/1999 from savings realized from previous Swiss contributions, while the remaining continuing 154 students were financed in 1998/1999 from other sources (see para. 3 above). In 1999, owing to the cancellation of a portion of the university scholarship fund financed from the UNRWA General Fund budget and the lack of funding from donors for the subprogramme, the UNRWA Education Department used funds already available from the Swiss contribution to finance the graduation of the majority of students. The number of students from the five fields of the UNRWA area of operations in the academic year 2002/03 was six. Between 1993 and 2002, 430 students graduated, and in the academic year 2001/02, one student failed.

5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as part of its long-standing agreement with UNRWA and within the framework of the regular programme regarding scholarships for Palestinians, granted 10 scholarships in favour of Palestinian students during the 2001-2002 biennium.

6. In academic year 2002/03, the World Health Organization provided a total of 15 fellowships/study tours for qualified Palestinian candidates, nominated by the Palestinian Authority, enrolled in various specializations.

7. In July 2000, the International Development Research Centre pledged $1,314,607 to UNRWA to finance the Scholarship Fund for Palestine Refugee Women in Lebanon over a period of six years. In academic year 2002/03, 90 students were enrolled in specializations at Lebanese universities.

8. Mr. Samer Hamada pledged $80,000 to UNRWA over a period of four years ($20,000 per year), beginning in 2000/01, to finance university-level study for 20 special hardship case students in Jordan. During academic year 2000/01, 20 students were enrolled in 12 specializations at various Jordanian universities.

9. In 2000/01, the Cisco Learning Institute/International Youth Foundation Project in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip funded 60 training scholarships under the Cisco Networking Academy Programme. These scholarships were distributed to 24 students in the Gaza Strip and 36 students in the West Bank.

10. In 2001/02, the Emergency Appeal Programme in the West Bank funded 50 scholarships to students who are enrolled in 13 specializations at 14 universities.